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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 6848
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1800
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SUBJECT: FRENCH RESPONSE ON SUPPORTING AFGHANISTAN'S
CANDIDACY FOR THE IAEA BOARD OF GOVERNORS

REF: STATE 87744

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Kathleen Allegrone for reasons 1.4. (b), (d).

¶1. (C) We delivered reftel message on supporting Afghanistan's candidacy for the MESA seat on the IAEA Board of Governors (BOG) to French MFA DAS-equivalent for Levantine affairs Ludovic Pouille on 19 August. Prior to that meeting, we had previewed the pitch we would be making on August 13 to French Syria desk officers Jean-Christophe Auge and Patrick Durel, including the suggestion that French FM Kouchner consider asking the Syrians to renounce their bid when he visits Damascus (now scheduled for August 25).

¶2. (C) Pouille stated that France firmly opposes Syrian membership of the BOG for all the reasons we stated in our demarche. France is not, however, eager to get into a full-blown and public confrontation with the relevant regional groupings to force acceptance of Afghanistan or any other country other than Syria (or Iran, now that it, too, may seek the seat). Instead, Pouille continued, France is prepared to work quietly and behind the scenes to persuade the MESA bloc to back another candidate. Despite this willingness, he was skeptical the Arabs would back off their current position supporting Syria and was especially doubtful that Jordan, as some have rumored, would willingly step forward as an alternative. Pouille said France would want to work with us on this in the weeks ahead.

¶3. (C) When we asked whether Kouchner might consider quietly asking the Syrians to withdraw their candidacy, Pouille replied that he would pass the question up his chain of command. He acknowledged that it made sense, but he was non-committal when asked the chances Kouchner might agree.

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